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RESERVE BANK INCREASES UPI LITE'S PER-TRANSACTION LIMIT TO ₹1,000

The Reserve Bank of India also enhanced the on-device wallet's total limit at any point in time from ₹2,000 at present to ₹5,000

MOVE TO WIDEN SCOPE OF OFFLINE PAYMENTS

The central bank on Wednesday amended the 'offline framework' issued in January 2022 to facilitate small-value offline digital payments. Till now, the upper limit for a UPI Lite transaction was ₹500 and the maximum amount of money you could hold on your on-device wallet was ₹2,000. The RBI had announced its decision on raising the limits in October

AIM IS TO ENCOURAGE DIGITAL TRANSACTIONS

- Transaction and wallet limits are being raised to encourage wider adoption of the popular instant payment system
- UPI Lite payments don't require an Additional Factor of Authentication like a PIN or a password and transaction alerts are not sent in real-time
- UPI Lite was introduced in 2022 with a per transaction limit of ₹200

516 mn
IS THE AVERAGE NUMBER OF DAILY UPI TRANSACTIONS IN NOVEMBER

CHENNAI • MADURAI • VIJAYAWADA • BENGALURU • KOCHI • HYDERABAD • VISAKHAPATNAM • COIMBATORE • KOZHIKODE • THIRUVANANTHAPURAM • BELAGAVI • BHUBANESWAR • SHIVAMOGGA • MANGALURU • TIRUPATI • TIRUCHY • TIRUNELVELI • SAMBALPUR • HUBBALLI • DHARMAPURI • KOTTAYAM • KANNUR • VILLUPURAM • KOLLAM • TADEPALLIGUDEM • NAGAPATTINAM • THRISSUR • KALABURAGI

Shiv Sena chief Eknath Shinde, flanked by BJP leader Devendra Fadnavis (L) and NCP chief Ajit Pawar, share a light moment at a press meet in Mumbai on Wednesday | PTI

SWEARING-IN TODAY; NOVEMBER 25 TNIE REPORT SAID HE WAS THE LIKELY CM PICK

AJIT PAWAR TO BE DY CHIEF MINISTER; SUSPENSE CONTINUES OVER SHINDE

Fadnavis to be Maha CM

SUDHIR SURYAWANSHI @ Mumbai

ENDING days of speculation, Devendra Fadnavis was on Wednesday unanimously elected the leader of Maharashtra BJP Legislative Party, paving the way for his swearing in as chief minister.

This newspaper had on November 25 reported that Fadnavis was likely to be picked as Maharashtra chief minister.

Fadnavis will take oath on Thursday at 5.30 pm, after Governor C P Radhakrishnan invited him to form the new government in the state. Two deputy chief ministers, including NCP leader Ajit Pawar, will also be sworn in at the ceremony at the sprawling Azad Maidan in south Mumbai on Thursday.

There is no clarity on whether Shiv Sena leader and outgoing CM and Eknath Shinde will be a part of the new government, though Fadnavis said he has requested him to join.

In the joint press conference with Fadnavis and Pawar, Shinde said he has offered his support to the new government to be led by Fadnavis, but he refused to clarify whether he will become deputy chief minister. Shinde said he needs time to think over it and he will take the decision by consulting his people.

Meanwhile, Shinde is facing pressure from his party to join the government. "We are hopeful that Shinde saheb will listen to us and be part of the government," said Shiv Sena MLA and former minister Uday Samant.

Sources said Shinde has demanded the home portfolio with an added condition that there should not be any interference in his ministry. Shinde has also handed over the list of names of probable ministers from the Shiv Sena to Fadnavis, who said he would consult the BJP's top leadership and get back on the demands.

"There is pressure over Shinde by his own MLAs and former ministers to be part of the new government. The BJP is offering urban development revenue ministry instead of home ministry.. We are confident that he will accept the deal," said a BJP leader.

This is the third time in 10 years that Fadnavis is becoming the chief minister of Maharashtra. In 2014, he made history as the state's first Brahmin chief minister in nearly 40 years. In 2019, he managed to form government with the help of Ajit Pawar but it lasted only a few days.

'BJP-LED GOVT WILL HELP STATE GROW'

Union finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman, BJP's central observer for the legislature party meet, said on Wednesday that BJP governments in Maharashtra and the Centre will help the state become a greater economic powerhouse in the country

NO ROOM FOR TAINTED LEADERS, ALLIES TOLD

According to BJP sources, Fadnavis wants to have leaders with clean image in his cabinet so that his government can deliver on the poll promises. Alliance partners Shiv Sena and the NCP have reportedly been told not to recommend 'tainted and painted' MLAs as ministers | P10

ED letter to Lokayukta on MUDA probe politically motivated: Siddu

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Mysuru

CHIEF Minister Siddaramaiah on Wednesday termed the Enforcement Directorate's (ED) letter to the Karnataka Lokayukta on MUDA probe politically motivated.

In its letter, the ED observed that it found evidence of irregularities in the allotment of MUDA sites to Siddaramaiah's wife. It also stated that MUDA had illegally allotted sites worth Rs 700 crore to several individuals.

Siddaramaiah told reporters here that the ED wrote to the Lokayukta a day before the HC will hear his petition. Siddaramaiah's petition challenging the single bench's order will be heard on Thursday.

It was written with malafide intentions to influence the court proceedings, the CM alleged.

Siddaramaiah said the ED's investigation into the case is illegal. The ED should have submitted its report to the Lokayukta instead of leaking it to news agencies and TV channels. This act of ED demonstrated that there is a political agenda behind it, he alleged.

He said the Lokayukta has been directed to complete its investigation before December 24 and submit its report to the court.

On Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar's claim that there is a power-sharing formula in the state and that he will disclose it at an appropriate time, Siddaramaiah said there is no such formula. Any decision on the matter will be taken by the Congress high command, he added.

He denied reports that there would be a cabinet reshuffle soon and said it was the media's creation. He has no information regarding this from the party high command, the CM added.

Police in plainclothes subdue a man (in black pants) who tried to shoot Sukhbir Singh Badal | PTI

The suspect being taken away by the police | PTI

Sukhbir Badal narrowly escapes assassination bid

HARPREET BAJWA @ Chandigarh

SHIROMANI Akali Dal (SAD) chief Sukhbir Singh Badal on Wednesday narrowly escaped an assassination attempt outside the Golden Temple in Amritsar.

Badal was performing the duty of 'sewadar' at the main gate of the shrine when a former Babbar Khalsa International terrorist Narain Singh Chaura tried to shoot him around 9.30 am, but missed.

Standing a few meters away from Badal, Chaura took out a pistol and tried to shoot Badal, but was quickly subdued by the security personnel in plain clothes. A bullet was fired, which missed Badal and hit a wall.

Detailing the incident, Amritsar Police Commissioner Gurpreet Singh Bhullar said, "One of the police personnel Rashpal Singh saw Chaura and followed him. As he tried to fire at Badal, two other police personnel, Jasbir Singh and Parminder Singh, overpowered him and the bullet hit a wall."

Bhullar said 175 police personnel in plain clothes were deployed at the site. The fore was headed by an AIG-level officer. Chaura was arrested at the spot and his gun was seized by the police. He was already facing charges in 30 cases, including one under the Explosives Act.

> We demand a High Court monitored probe into the entire incident to unmask the conspiracy behind it
>
> Bikram Singh Majithia, SAD leader

Pronouncing 'tankhah' (religious punishment) for Sukhbir Singh Badal and other leaders for the "mistakes" committed by his government in Punjab from 2007 to 2017, the Akal Takht had on Monday directed Badal to wash dishes and clean shoes at the Golden Temple in Amritsar as a 'sewadar'.

Badal has a Z-plus security cover, which means both the Punjab Police and the central forces are part of his protection detail.

PAPERLESS PUSH

K'taka Houses likely to have tablets for legislators

ASHWINI M SRIPAD @ Bengaluru

BY next year, legislators in Karnataka are likely to have touchscreen devices on their tables in both Houses to read reports, bills, and access vital information during sessions.

This is part of the state government's initiative to make sessions paperless. It is expected to save at least Rs 30 crore annually by not printing reports and booklets to be given to the legislators and others. This initiative will also allow the public to access the draft bills.

With this, Karnataka will become the first state in the country to go paperless in both its Houses. A detailed project report (DPR) will be ready in the next few months. If things move as planned, by next year, the system will be in place.

Though the National E-Vidhan Application (NeVA) facility to make legislature proceedings paperless is in place, only a few states have adopted it. Speaker of the Assembly UT Khader said this facility is not apt for Karnataka as it has a bicameral legislature (Assembly and Council). There are technical issues with it.

He said, "The Centre will share 50 per cent of the project cost. NeVA is not being used by the Parliament itself as it is also bicameral. It is not about the facility's cost. When this facility is of little help for the bicameral system, what is the use of having it?" P5

DIGITAL GAP

Only 10.68% of govt schools in state have internet access

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Bengaluru

ONLY 10.68% of government schools in Karnataka have internet connectivity, while 71.98% of private schools have this facility.

In Kerala, 94.57% of government schools have the facility. The percentage of government schools having this facility in Gujarat is 94.18, a reply in Rajya Sabha to a question by MPs Phulo Devi Netam and Ranjeet Ranjan on 'digital infrastructure in government schools' revealed this.

Karnataka has 49,679 government schools. Of them, only 5,308 have access to the internet, according to the reply. Of the 19,650 private schools in the state, 14,145 have the facility. The percentage in New Delhi (2,762 government schools), Chandigarh (123) and Puducherry (422) is 100. In Kerala (5,010) and Gujarat (34,699), it is 94.57 and 94.18, respectively. In Bihar (75,558), the percentage is 5.85.

Development educationist Niranjanaradhya VP said it is sad that government schools lack internet connectivity.

"Though digital technologies supplement physical classroom processes where competent and qualified teachers play a significant role, it is important to have access to the internet with appropriate gadgets," he said.

CONTINUED ON P5

Congress leaders Rahul Gandhi and Priyanka Gandhi Vadra at the Ghazipur border on Wednesday | PTI

Rahul stopped from visiting Sambhal

PREETHA NAIR @ New Delhi

A Congress delegation led by Rahul Gandhi was on Wednesday stopped by the Uttar Pradesh police from visiting the violence-hit Sambhal district where prohibitory orders were in place.

"We want to go to Sambhal and see what happened there. We want to meet the people but I'm not being allowed my constitutional right. This is a new India where attempts are on to end Ambedkar's Constitution," he said.

Congress leaders, including Priyanka Gandhi Vadra and general secretary K C Venugopal, were sent back to Delhi after a two-hour standoff at the Delhi-Uttar Pradesh border.

Holding up a copy of the Constitution in his hand at the Gazipur border, Rahul termed the police action as undemocratic.

Rahul said though he was ready to go alone to Sambhal in a police vehicle, the police did not heed his request.

"I said that I am ready to go alone, I am ready to go with the police, but they did not accept that either. Now they are saying that if we come back in a few days, they will let us go".

Violence erupted in Sambhal on November 24 over a court-ordered survey of a mosque, killing four people and injuring several others.

"He is different from other people. He cannot be stopped. He has the constitutional right to go and meet the victims, he should be allowed," Wayanad MP Priyanka said.

BJP SLAMS RAHUL

The BJP on Wednesday flayed Rahul Gandhi for trying to visit Sambhal without giving prior intimation to authorities

DARK SIDE OF SPORT

India cricketers heckled and body-shamed in Adelaide

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Chennai

PERHAPS, the organisers never expected such a crowd. The open nets session for India at Adelaide before the second day and night Test match against Australia turned carnivalesque. Almost. It turned into chaos.

About 3,000 (some put that figure at 5,000) spectators descended at the practice wickets at Adelaide to watch their favourite stars going through their practice rituals. According to reports, the crowd started to laugh and tease players whenever they got out or were missing the ball. On the other hand, Australia team practice did not see a turnout of more than 100 people. Things started to turn ugly as some of the spectators started to request for selfies,

even while batting, and if reports are to be believed, some were even doing *Facebook* live from the practice centre. Reports also indicated that players were even laughed and mocked at. The crowd also seemed to have gone personal, attacking certain player for fitness. What really irked the team was that the vociferous crowd distracted them and concentration while batting was getting difficult.

"It was complete chaos. During the Australian training session, not more than 70-odd people turned up but during India's session, 3,000 came. No one expected so many fans to turn up," a senior Indian cricket board official told a news agency. The anonymity cricketers held may be in the last century is slowly changing with more engagement from the South Asian communities in Australia. The BCCI has banned all net sessions after this. P17

EXPRESS READ

Bhovi scam: SIT to probe charges against DySP

BENGALURU: Considering the allegations of businesswoman S Jeeva in her death note and another accused in the Karnataka Bhovi Development Corporation scam against CID DySP Kanaka Lakshmi BM, the Karnataka High Court has constituted an SIT to probe the charges | P3

Woman dies at Pushpa premiere in Hyderabad

HYDERABAD: The excitement to watch the latest Allu Arjun-starrer Pushpa-2: The Rule, cost a woman her life, and left at least two injured, after they were crushed by the crowd at Sandhya theatre in Hyderabad late on Wednesday | P5